

S P E C I F I C A T I O N**TEST PIECE FOR INSPECTION PENETRANT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
AND COMPARISON****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

This application is a continuation in part of applicant's application, Serial No. 09/197,884, filed November 23, 1998, by the present applicant, ^{and new patent no. 6,311,538} which in turn has the benefit of provisional patent application Serial No. 60/070,839 filed January 9, 1998.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Inspection penetrants are used to find surface cracks in all types of insoluble materials, but primarily in nonmagnetic metals, such as aluminum, high nickel alloy, stainless steel and titanium. These metals predominate in the aerospace industry. On many aerospace parts, such as rotating discs of turbine engines, even the most microscopic cracks must be found, as these microscopic cracks will propagate under the stresses and loads placed on them during operation. Propagation can be extremely rapid and part failure sudden and catastrophic.

Inspection of such critical parts for surface cracks, whether newly manufactured or parts that have been in service, is accomplished with fluorescent penetrants. The process consists

1 of application of fluorescent penetrant, an oily-like fluid
2 charged with fluorescent dyestuff, to the surface of the part by
3 immersion, brushing or spraying; allowing the fluorescent
4 penetrant to remain on the surface for sufficient time to enter
5 microscopic surface openings by capillary action; removing the
6 penetrant that did not enter cracks and surface flaws from the
7 surface by washing with a pressure rinse of plain water or with
8 the aid of a detergent or emulsifying agent. The part is then
9 dried in an oven and typically a developing agent is applied to
10 bring the crack entrapped fluorescent penetrant back to the
11 surface so it may be seen as a glowing line under ultraviolet
12 light (black light) in a darkened room.

13 The fluorescent penetrant system must function properly or
14 cracks will go undetected. These cracks can propagate into
15 catastrophic failures. For example, if the penetrant has become
16 contaminated with different substances, its fluorescing
17 properties will be diminished. If the mechanism for applying the
18 developing agent is malfunctioning, the flaws will not be clearly
19 identifiable under the ultraviolet light. There are other causes
20 for failure such as rinse water with a too-high temperature and a
21 too-high concentration of detergent which will prematurely remove
22 penetrant from cracks.

23 To defend against processing critical aerospace and turbine
24 engine parts in a malfunctioning fluorescent penetrant system, a
25 general requirement is to prove the system each day before it is

1 used by processing a test panel with known defects. If, after
2 processing, these known defects are not displayed as anticipated,
3 i.e. with the same completeness and brilliance as in previous
4 tests, this alerts the operator of the need to check the system
5 for a malfunction.

6 Probably the best known panel for this purpose, and most
7 widely used, is the PSM-5 panel manufactured by Sherwin
8 Incorporated, South Gate, California, to Pratt & Whitney drawing
9 TAM 146040, which drawing is dated April 1975. The PSM-5 panel
10 is a 4x6" piece of stainless steel, thickness 0.090" with a strip
11 of hard chrome plate running lengthwise down one side. The
12 thickness of this chrome plate is 0.003" or greater. As hard
13 chrome plating is applied electrolytically, its thickness will
14 vary over the surface with heavier coating to be anticipated at
15 the edges. Five cracks of varying magnitude, evenly spaced, are
16 induced by exerted pressure opposite the hard chrome strip with a
17 Brinell hardness test instrument. The balance of the front of
18 this test piece and adjacent the chrome strip is a rough area
19 obtained by grit blasting with aluminum oxide or other media.

20 The most difficult task in manufacturing the PSM-5 panel is
21 in the formation of the smallest crack, a crack diameter in the
22 range of 0.015" to 0.030". This small crack, necessary to verify
23 the system's ability to find the truly microscopic crack, is
24 difficult to produce, as there is no room for the slightest error
25 in the plating composition or in the pressure exerted by the

1 hardness tester. The crack is formed by pressure exerted by a
2 hard round ball on the side opposite to the plating. The plating
3 side is backed up against a selected surface. The pressure is
4 measured by weight, pounds or kilograms. Although the hardness
5 test equipment includes an instrument to indicate in kilograms
6 the weight force, there is a lag in indication and this equipment
7 is not sufficiently precise to give controlled crack formation in
8 the area of small cracks whose detection is required by today's
9 advanced industry.

10 The method of inducing cracks with a hardness tester has an
11 inherent deficiency. If the induced crack fails to meet its
12 specification, it is not possible to review and remeasure to
13 verify if the prescribed pressure was applied. The indentation
14 left by the hardness tester is not measurable with ordinary
15 tools.

16 As the aerospace industry continues to reduce the weight of
17 their vehicles while at the same time demanding higher
18 performance and placing greater stress loads on the components,
19 the need for the penetrant process capability to locate smaller
20 surface flaws becomes more critical. The need for a test piece
21 that verifies the inspection system's capability to meet these
22 more demanding specification requirements is obvious.

23 No two PSM-5 panels are exactly alike. They are produced
24 individually. Further, the cracking method cannot be precisely
25 controlled. It is not possible to hold two PSM-5 panels side-by-

1 side and expect to see equivalency in the crack patterns. The
2 PSM-5 panel cannot be used to reliably compare relative
3 sensitivity between two different penetrants because no two
4 panels are equivalent. One cannot expect to process one panel
5 with new penetrant and another with in-use penetrant and obtain a
6 meaningful comparison. This is due in part to the fact that the
7 panels are produced separately and not as one piece. It is also
8 due to the method of cracking, applying pressure until cracking
9 occurs.

10 Recognizing this deficiency in the PSM-5 panel, governing
11 agencies now require the user of the PSM-5 panel to photograph
12 the panel when first processed with unused penetrant materials in
13 the laboratory and, then to use this photograph to compare
14 results obtained when the panel is subsequently processed through
15 the production penetrant system on a daily basis. Although this
16 has some utility, it is not truly satisfactory, since, in order
17 to take photographs under ultraviolet light, time exposures are
18 required and the photographed fluorescent crack indications will
19 vary in size and definition with exposure time, as well as with
20 film negative and printing paper and technique. Further the
21 photograph must be viewed under white light, as the crack
22 indications in the photograph do not fluoresce. The panel itself
23 must be read under ultraviolet light. Such indications cannot be
24 viewed and compared to actual fluorescing indications in the

1 darkened inspection booth where the lighting is ultraviolet and
2 be meaningful.

3 But this recently imposed requirement of a photographic
4 comparison in such specifications as ASTM E 1417, despite its
5 inadequacies, is evidence of the need of a reference point when
6 interpreting the panel's results.

7 Also, although the PSM-5 cracks may be small, e.g. 0.015" of
8 an inch in diameter, their depth is the depth of the plating
9 which is 0.003" or greater. The nature of the hard chrome
10 requires a plating thickness of close to 0.003" to crack with a
11 pressure load, otherwise, it stretches until it splits
12 uncontrolled. A crack 0.003" or more in depth retains
13 considerable penetrant and, therefore, does not reveal abusive
14 over-washing and over-heating in processing as readily as it
15 should. Further, a crack with this depth tends to retain
16 penetrant even when subjected to extensive cleaning between
17 tests. Such retained penetrant from a previous test leads to
18 erroneous conclusions on subsequent tests. ASTM E 1417 stresses
19 the need for adequate cleaning of the known defect standard
20 between tests.

21 To meet today's need, the brittle coating must lend itself
22 to controlled cracking in thin coatings, less than 0.002". Thin
23 coats of chrome plating, such as 0.001", do not crack uniformly
24 even though pressure exerted is uniform. Although there may be a
25 place for chrome plating, metal conversion coatings, silicate and

1 other brittle coatings, and these coatings lend themselves to the
2 controlled method of cracking that I discovered, my favorite
3 brittle coating is nickel plate, either electrolytic or
4 electroless nickel type, because a thin coat of nickel plate
5 lends itself to controlled cracking. Cracks can be induced with
6 my invention in nickel plate in a coating as thin as 0.00025" in
7 a controlled manner.

8 Although we have fabricated panels with plating thickness of
9 0.00025" which have proven to be a practical tool, typically, we
10 have found the plating thickness of 0.001" the most useful.
11 Cracks of this depth duplicate the small shallow cracks which are
12 the object of today's most exacting inspections. The penetrant
13 retained in a crack reservoir 0.001" deep with a diameter of
14 0.015" is sufficiently minuscule for the entrapped penetrant to
15 be affected deleteriously by over-washing, over-heating and
16 inadequate developer application. Abusive processing or a
17 substandard penetrant material is more readily apparent with a
18 test piece with shallow, 0.001" cracks than when crack depth of
19 the test piece is 0.003" or greater.

20 An added advantage of the thinner coating is the ease of
21 cleaning the panel and freeing the crack reservoirs of materials
22 deposited during previous use. A 15 minute soak in alcohol is
23 all that is required to clear the reservoirs whereas a lengthy
24 bath in an ultrasonic cleaning tank charged with a chlorinated

1 solvent often has to be repeated to clear the crack reservoirs of
2 the PSM-5 panel.

3 Like the PSM-5 test piece, my favorite substrate is
4 stainless steel, as it is rugged in construction, not subject to
5 corrosion, and withstands the rough handling when sent through
6 the penetrant system.

7 There are other test pieces used to evaluate inspection
8 penetrants, such as thermally cracked aluminum blocks and
9 "nickel-chrome" test panels. These panels are not suitable
10 replacements for the PSM-5 type panel and are not intended for
11 use in evaluating the functioning of an inspection penetrant
12 system.

13 The nickel-chrome test panel for the sake of clarification
14 should be described, so it will be understood that it does not
15 compete with our invention. It is known in the industry as the
16 "twin nickel-chrome panel." This panel's substrate is brass,
17 subject to corrosion. The plating is brittle nickel with a flash
18 of chrome. Panels usually measure about 1½x4" and are 0.06
19 thick. The plating will vary in thickness from as thin as
20 0.0002" (5µm) to 0.002" (50µm).

21 The panels are bent over curved anvils to induce cracking
22 and then straightened, as shown in U.S. Patent No. 4,610,157.
23 The main difficulty with the "twin nickel-chrome panel" is the
24 form of the cracks, straight cracks, running laterally from one

1 edge of the test piece to the other edge. The cracks' geometries
2 are open troughs. Penetrant that enters this type of cracking is
3 easily flushed through the open trench or trough. While it is
4 possible to compare the visibility of two penetrants by judicious
5 removal of surface penetrant, it is not possible to process these
6 test pieces in the work environment. The penetrant flushes from
7 the "troughs" too readily. These test pieces have a limited
8 function. For this and other reasons, they are not a practical
9 tool for monitoring a penetrant system. The "twin nickel-chrome
10 panel" is primarily a laboratory tool. Another patent which
11 shows a test panel process is U.S. Patent No. 4,078,417.

12 The nickel-chrome test panel is normally produced as a
13 single panel which is later sheared into matching panels. It can
14 be used for side-by-side comparisons of different penetrant
15 materials in the laboratory. It is not sufficiently rugged to be
16 used to measure the capability of a production penetrant system
17 and it gives erroneous data relative to the wash cycle.

18 The present continuation in part application is concerned
19 with the means to further control the magnitude of the induced
20 cracks made in the test piece. The objective of the improved
21 process is to manufacture test pieces with precise crack sizes,
22 both in crack depth and crack length. The use of the penetration
23 method described in the present application has made possible
24 precision induced cracking in the production of virtual twin test
25 pieces where a single brittle coating specimen is shared into

1 equivalent sections as the brittle plating coating is applied at
2 the same time on both sections. However, it has been difficult
3 or impossible to extend this control when the plating differs,
4 which is the case with specimens plated at different times. The
5 present improvement makes possible such depth and length control
6 by confining the cracking force to a predetermined limited area
7 by weakening the substrate to such a predetermined limited area.

8 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

9 It was discovered that by drilling holes part way through
10 the substrate from the back of the substrate toward the plated
11 side, cracks could be induced in a much more controlled area,
12 namely, the area equal to the diameter of the hole which has been
13 drilled part way through the substrate. The tool used to produce
14 cracking described in the present application is inserted in the
15 incompletely drilled holes and forced against the bottom of the
16 hole an amount sufficient to create cracks in the plated surface
17 on the plated side of the test plate. The result was a highly
18 controlled crack depth and length which did not require the
19 plating of other panels to be done at the same time.

20 The present invention is for a method of forming controlled
21 cracks in a predetermined area of brittle plating on a plated
22 surface of a test plate which comprises a substrate which has a
23 plated area on a plated side and a back side. One or more holes
24 are drilled part way through the substrate from the back side of

1 the test plate opposite a plated area of the test plate to create
2 a cavity having a cavity diameter and a cavity bottom. The point
3 of a hardened tip is inserted into the cavity and forced against
4 the cavity bottom with sufficient force to create a deformation
5 of a portion of the plated area beneath the cavity bottom. This
6 forms a plurality of cracks in the plated area limited to an area
7 no larger than the cavity diameter. Preferably, holes of
8 different sizes are drilled in the test plate to provide cracks
9 of different depth and length. The holes are preferably drilled
10 more than half way through the substrate.

11 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

12 Figure 1 is a perspective view of the tool used in the
13 process of the present invention together with a test panel being
14 formed.

15 Figure 2 is a front view of the plated side of a test plate
16 made according to the process of the present invention.

17 Figure 3 is a front view of the plated side of the test
18 plate of Figure 2 sheared into two individual test plates.

19 Figure 4 is a plan view of a test plate as viewed from the
20 back side with two sets of three drilled cavities therein.

21 Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 of
22 Figure 4.

23 Figure 6 is a bottom view of the test plate of Figure 4.

1 Figure 7 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7-7 of
2 Figure 5.

3 Figure 8 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 8-8 of
4 Figure 5.

5 Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 9-9 of
6 Figure 5.

7 Figure 10 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of a cavity
8 with a hardened tip inserted therein.

9 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

10 The tool of the present invention is shown in Figure 1 and
11 indicated generally by reference character 10. The tool has a
12 frame 11 which supports a block 12. Block 12 holds a manually
13 turned penetrating assembly 13 which has a handle 14, a threaded
14 shaft 15 and a penetrating tool point 16. A finger 17 moves with
15 the threaded shaft 15 and the penetrating point 16. Finger 17
16 presses against the measuring arm 18 of dial test indicator 19.
17 Dial test indicator 19 is held by an arm 20 which is secured to
18 frame 11. Frame 11 also holds a backing block 21. Backing block
19 21 has a cavity into which an anvil (not shown) is held.

20 The important feature of the process of the present
21 invention is to control the depth of the penetration of point 16
22 into the test plate or panel 25. Panel 25 is preferably
23 stainless steel including 316, 321 and 18-8 and panel 25 has a
24 plated side 26 and an uncoated side 27. The plating can be

1 formed by hard chrome, electrolytic nickel and electroless nickel
2 to a thickness of between 0.0002" and 0.002". This plating forms
3 a brittle coating in which cracks form when the back surface is
4 penetrated by point 16. By moving the point 16 into contact with
5 the uncoated side 27, zeroing the dial test indicator 19 and
6 measuring the distance of penetration, a highly controlled series
7 of cracks is formed. For example, penetration to a depth of
8 0.016" is typical to make a crack with a diameter area of 0.015".
9 Most commonly, five craters such as craters 29, 30 and 31 of
10 Figure 1 are formed of increasing depths equally spaced along
11 panel 25.

12 The industry also requires a test piece for comparing
13 penetrant sensitivity. Such panels are shown in Figure 3 and are
14 formed from a single panel shown in Figure 2. In the past, twin
15 nickel chrome panels have been made by plating a brass panel
16 which is then bent over an arbor which induces lateral cracking.
17 The plated brass is then straightened and sheared into two
18 equivalent pieces. Because these cracks run laterally, they are
19 in effect troughs which are open at both ends. Such open troughs
20 tend to be too easily flushed by normal processing and thus, have
21 limited practical function. The test panels of the present
22 invention do much more to monitor the system in that they compare
23 visibility after production-type processing, they compare
24 washability with the grit-blasted roughened area, and provide an
25 accurate control during production. These panels are made

1 preferably using an electroless plated primary nickel, but with a
2 higher percentage of phosphoric acid than normal. The addition
3 of phosphoric acid gives added brittleness to the coating making
4 it possible for crack plating with a thickness as thin as
5 0.0002" (5 micrometers). The point 16 is preferably round rather
6 than a depressed oval as formed by a Brinell hardness tester.
7 Furthermore, the method of inducing cracks of the present
8 invention permits the accurate reinsertion of the needle-like
9 instrument that initially formed the round hole if it is
10 necessary to increase the magnitude of the cracking. In the
11 past, there has been considerable difficulty in producing this
12 smallest diameter crack, the one measuring 0.015" or less.

13 As shown in Figure 2, panel 30 is a rectangular plate having
14 a top edge 31, a bottom edge 32, a right side 33 and a left side
15 34. Panel 30 has positioned midway between the right side and
16 the left side. A first middle zone 36 is located between
17 vertical center 35 and right side 33, a second middle zone 37 is
18 located between vertical center 35 and left side 34. The area
19 between the first and second middle zones 36 and 37 has been
20 grit-blasted and a pair of support holes 38 and 39 have been
21 formed one-fourth way in from the right side and the left side.
22 The area between the first middle zone 36 and right side 33 and
23 second middle zone 37 and left side 34 are simultaneously plated,
24 preferable with electroless plating, primarily nickel, but with a
25 high percentage of phosphoric acid. Then a series of increasing

1 cracks 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 are formed in the brittle plated
2 area 50. Similarly, cracked areas 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55 are
3 formed by the above-described process in brittle plated area 51.

4 Next, as shown in Figure 3, the panel 30 is sheared into two
5 panels 52 and 53 which are nearly identical since they were
6 plated at the same time from the same sheet. These panels,
7 therefore, become very useful in the twin panels test.

8 A panel 60 is shown in Figure 4 from the back side. Panel
9 60 has two plated areas 61 and 62 shown in Figure 6 and indicated
10 by phantom lines in Figure 4. Three cavities comprising a
11 smallest cavity 63, intermediate cavity 64, and a largest cavity
12 65, are drilled part way through panel 60 in an area adjacent
13 plated areas 61 and 62. These cavities are shown in cross-
14 sectional view in Figures 7, 8, and 9. For instance, in Figure 7
15 it can be seen that hole 63 passes through a majority of the
16 substrate 66, but does not enter the plated area 67. For a
17 substrate of $\frac{3}{32}$ thickness and a plated area of between 0.001
18 and 0.002 inches thick, hole 63 passes a depth of about .007
19 leaving a thickness of substrate and plating between 0.022 and
20 0.025 inches.

21 As shown in Figure 10, a hardened tip 68 having a point 69
22 has been inserted into cavity 65 and forced downwardly against
23 backing block 70. This forms a cracked area 71 having a required
24 diameter controlled by the diameter D of cavity 65. Cracked
25 areas 71, 72, and 73 are shown in Figure 6 and correspond

1 approximately to the diameter of the cavities 65, 64, and 63,
2 respectively.

3 Because of the accurate limitation of the resulting crack
4 depth and crack length, the test plate can be created which
5 provides a very reproducible result as a standard. The hole
6 gives better control of the crack pattern. Without the hole, the
7 crack can get too big. With the hole, the crack pattern
8 generally does not exceed the hole diameter.

9 The present embodiments of this invention are thus to be
10 considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive;
11 the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims
12 rather than by the foregoing description. All changes which come
13 within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are
14 intended to be embraced therein.